

House Committee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities and Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education

Hearing on “Corporal Punishment in Schools and its Effect on Academic Success”

*Opening Statement of Ranking Member Todd Russell Platts
April 15, 2010*

Good morning and welcome to our hearing. Today we will bring together experts to discuss the effects of corporal punishment on students’ academic success.

When parents send their children off to school in the morning, we do so with the expectation that they will be in a safe environment and disciplined in a manner that is conducive to emotional and academic growth and achievement. Most of us can agree that corporal punishment—broadly defined as any punishment in which physical force is used to cause some degree of pain and discomfort—does not have a place in our schools.

The majority of states have recognized this, including my home state of Pennsylvania, and have banned the practice of corporal

punishment in schools. These policies have been highly successful in the dramatic decrease of corporal punishment instances in our Nation's schools. The voluntary implementation of a ban in thirty states has resulted in an 85% decrease in the number of students who experience some degree of corporal punishment.

As is always central to our work on this subcommittee, it is important that we understand the academic influence of corporal punishment. Given the limited research on its effects on a student's academic performance, I very much look forward to hearing our witnesses' testimonies today. Thank you, Chairwoman McCarthy.